
Federal Agency and Federal Library Reports

National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

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In November 1986 the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) celebrated its fifteenth anniversary as an independent federal agency. Officially created by PL 91-345 in 1970, NCLIS held its first meeting in fall 1971. The anniversary was a time for reflecting on the many accomplishments of the first 15 years and for looking ahead to new directions and leadership.

In October 1986, the U.S. Senate confirmed Kenneth Y. Tomlinson as the fourth chairman of NCLIS. He was sworn in for a five-year term by Secretary of Education William Bennett on November 18. A former director of the Voice of America, Tomlinson is executive editor of *Reader's Digest*. Vivian J. Arterbery, library director at the Rand Corporation and a former president of the Special Libraries Association, became the commission's new executive director in November 1986.

Most of the commission's work during 1986 focused on four major program areas: (1) improvement of library and information services to meet changing needs, (2) access to information, (3) information technology and productivity, and (4) policy planning and advice.

Improvement of Library/Information Services

The commission continued to initiate partnerships to benefit the elderly, the fastest growing population group in the United States, as part of its continuing interest in improving library and information services to older Americans. At its April 1986 meeting, NCLIS announced the signing of an agreement with ACTION, the principal federal agency for administering volunteer service programs. NCLIS and ACTION agreed to work cooperatively at the national level and through their respective networks to promote the improvement and better use of library and information services to older Americans through voluntary activities.

Under the agreement, the two agencies will work together in a variety of ways to

enhance the use of public libraries as community-based institutions that provide essential services to the elderly. The agreement will support and strengthen the efforts of professional librarians who are trying to promote volunteer opportunities for the elderly as well as better use of library/information services by elderly persons.

NCLIS signed a similar agreement in 1985 with the Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, which has resulted in improved cooperation between libraries and agencies that serve the aging at the state and local levels.

Access to Information

NCLIS has always emphasized the importance of library and information services in the learning process and the development of essential skills needed to find and use information effectively. Recently, the commission launched a new Information Skills Program that aims to (1) define what is meant by information skills, (2) identify questions and problems related to the development of these skills, and (3) examine the possibility of a recognition program for those doing an outstanding job in teaching these skills. During 1985 and 1986, NCLIS convened several informal meetings of school library media program experts, resulting in a concept paper written at the commission's request by Jacqueline Mancall, Shirley Aaron, and Sue Walker. Entitled "Educating Students to Think: The Role of the School Library Media Program," the paper was published with accompanying comments in the Fall 1986 issue of *School Library Media Quarterly*. The commission is working with government and private sector representatives to examine the most effective methods of disseminating the ideas in the concept paper.

Last year's *Bowker Annual* (pp. 89-112) reprinted the commission's 1985 study, "The Role of Fees in Supporting Library and Information Services in Public and Academic Libraries." In response to the NCLIS report, the American Library Association Office for Research developed plans for a survey that will document sources of nontax sources of income for public libraries, with special emphasis on services for which public libraries charge fees, the categories of persons to whom fees are charged, the amount of revenue received from fees, and the uses made of that revenue. The H. W. Wilson Foundation has provided a grant to fund the survey.

Information Technology and Productivity

In 1986, NCLIS cosponsored and participated in two of a series of trilateral meetings on the Role of Information in the Economy. These conferences convened decision makers from industry, academia, and government from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada in order to (1) identify and measure the contributions of information to the economy, (2) share information among leaders in the three countries, and (3) disseminate summary reports of useful information. The private sector provided support for the meetings, including electronic conferencing and publishing.

The first meeting, held May 26-28 near Boston, was a forum for current information and expert views on the relationship between the growth of the information sector and national economies as a whole. Presentations from representatives of the three countries provided a foundation for discussion of national differences as well as universal trends in the growth of the information sector since the publication of Machlup's pioneering work, "The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States" in 1962.

The British Library hosted the second trilateral meeting, held October 31–November 2 in England, which focused on The Role of the Public Sector in the Information Infrastructure. This conference examined the role of government and libraries in the creation and distribution of information. The final meeting in the series is scheduled for spring 1987 in Canada. A report summarizing the three meetings and reprinting key papers will be published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy in Canada. NCLIS is sharing results of the meetings through print and other media to help ensure that the findings reach decision makers in all sectors.

Policy Planning and Advice

Throughout the year, NCLIS has been working to involve the nation's libraries as focal points in the celebration of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. The NCLIS Committee on the Bicentennial of the Constitution submitted to the chairman of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution a list of proposed projects, including a nationally televised, interactive panel discussion on the Constitution, a nationwide recognition program for exemplary school library programs and collections on the bicentennial, and a program of civic bicentennial celebrations and public forums to be held in local libraries.

The commission continued to work with Congress, the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce (WHCLIST), and the entire library/information community to plan for a second White House Conference on Library and Information Services in 1989. On April 8, Representative Major Owens (D-N.Y.) held a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education that included testimony on the plans for the conference. (Legislation for the conference was introduced in 1985 and had attracted more than 200 cosponsors in both houses of Congress by the end of 1986.)

In August, NCLIS hosted a luncheon meeting with representatives from approximately 15 national library/information organizations in order to share information on progress and plans toward the 1989 conference. Many associations have already established White House Conference committees, and others have passed resolutions in support of the conference. Several federal agencies that have appointed White House Conference liaisons were represented at the meeting. A meeting with the Federal Library and Information Center Committee in November brought federal librarians up to date on progress toward the conference and enlisted their support in the planning process.

After the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO, the State Department asked NCLIS—which formerly served as the secretariat for the U.S. National Committee for the UNESCO General Information Program—to continue to advise on matters relating to international library, information, and archives programs. When funding became available under PLs 99-83 and 99-190 to maintain and support continued U.S. participation in certain international activities previously supported by UNESCO, NCLIS was asked to work with the library/information community to identify priority programs in the international information, library, and archives area that meet the State Department's criteria.

In July 1986, NCLIS received a total of \$115,000 from the State Department for transfer to six approved projects. The recipients, amounts, and purposes of the grants follow.

- 1 Support for the operation of the International Federation for Documentation (FID) Clearinghouse on Education and Training at Syracuse University for one year (\$20,000)
- 2 Support for an International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) seminar on Latin American regional cooperation and library association leadership (\$25,000)
- 3 Support for U.S. participation in the 1986 FID Conference and Congress, including seminar activity (\$10,000)
- 4 Support for enhanced U.S. participation, via the National Information Standards Organization, in international information standards-setting bodies and for education and training in this area in the United States (\$35,000)
- 5 Support for a U.S. training program for foreign conservationists under the auspices of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration and the International Council on Archives (\$20,000)
- 6 Travel support for a U.S. observer delegation to the 1986 UNESCO General Information Program Intergovernmental Council Meeting (\$5,000)

The projects were completed or underway by the end of 1986, and progress reports will be received in 1987.

NCLIS will continue to work with the State Department to channel any available funding into appropriate international library/information programs.